

**Statement of Carol Shapiro, Founder and President of Family Justice
in Support of H.R. 1704
Second Chance Act of 2005: Community Safety through Recidivism Prevention
Before the Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism and Homeland Security
of the House Judiciary Committee
November 3, 2005**

Chairman Coble and members of the Subcommittee, it is an honor to appear before you today and speak in support of this important legislation. On behalf of Family Justice, a national nonprofit organization that taps the strengths of government, families, and communities to break cycles of criminal justice system involvement and promote public safety, I am pleased to express my enthusiastic support of H.R. 1704, the *Second Chance Act of 2005: Community Safety through Recidivism Prevention*. As you know, this legislation has broad bipartisan support, including from the White House. I urge favorable, swift action on this bill that will enhance state and local reentry programs, putting in place cost-effective strategies for addressing recidivism and other reentry challenges in communities throughout the United States, thereby increasing public safety.

This legislation is an important step in enhancing state and local reentry programs to support the parents, grandparents, sons, daughters, and whole communities affected by incarceration. Entire families and neighborhoods will benefit from this legislation, not just incarcerated individuals: consider the positive impact enhanced reentry programs will have on the 3,500,000 parents supervised by the correctional system, the 2,000,000 children with a parent in a Federal or State correctional facility, and the countless caregivers who step in when incarceration separates family members. These people will directly benefit from this legislation's support of coordinated planning for release, family-based treatment for substance abuse, and the recognition and incorporation of the role of family, as experts in the lives of their own members, into reentry programming and planning at an institutional and community level.

By engaging government and nonprofit partners to help families stay connected pre- and post-release, this legislation also stabilizes our social and economic structures. For communities, this entails increased workforce participation, greater public safety, and lower social service costs. By bolstering research and evaluation of reentry efforts, including additional assessment of the impact on affected families and communities, this initiative ensures that we create evidence-based practices that recognize and respond to the context in which people come home from jail or prison. For corrections and community corrections agencies, this requires a complement to existing assessment tools, which measure risks posed by individuals, and a focus on bridging the gap between assessment and the family-focused case management that makes reentry successful. Such tools will also help the field be more cognizant of the ramifications of gender in the reentry experience, an issue that is increasingly important as demographics shift; the number of incarcerated women, for example, grew 4% from 2003 to 2004, compared with a 1.8% increase for men.

Communities are embracing family-focused methods and family-based treatment because it is cost-efficient, customized, and sustainable. Family Justice's experience working with families,

confirmed by other organizations' research, demonstrates the important role families play in the success of people returning home from jail or prison, especially for those coping with addiction. With support, families are a critical resource in reducing recidivism and substance abuse; they are naturally vested in successful reentry, often the first to intervene before issues become crises, available 24 hours, and able to sustain over the long term the gains made by correctional, law enforcement, and nonprofit interventions.

We applaud The Second Chance Act's recognition of the success of family-based treatment. Family-focused methods have been demonstrated as a cost-effective way of decreasing substance abuse, reducing recidivism rates, improving access to physical and mental health care, and increasing overall family well-being.

According to the most recent data from the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the number of drug offenders in prisons and jails has risen from 40,000 in 1980 to more than 450,000 today. More than half of federal inmates were sentenced for drug offenses.¹ These statistics underscore the reality of our criminal justice system: any initiative to reduce criminal justice system involvement is inextricably linked to substance abuse treatment.

As this legislation notes, strong evidence demonstrates that family-based treatment programs help improve outcomes for individuals under criminal justice supervision. An evaluation by the Vera Institute of Justice² of Family Justice's direct service learning center, La Bodega de la Familia, showed that, by focusing on providing family support to people under parole supervision:

- Illegal drug use declined from 80% to 42% after six months—*not as a result of additional time in treatment, but rather family inclusion*;
- Rearrest rates declined; and
- Overall family well-being increased.

Additional research³ documents that the family plays a critical role in achieving sobriety and rehabilitation for drug users.

This bill calls for expanding family-based treatment programs that offer comprehensive treatment services for parents and their children as a complete family unit. In addition to the Council of State Governments Reentry Policy Report, a growing body of literature⁴ highlights the importance of family support in generating efficient and inclusive treatment.

The Urban Institute longitudinal studies of reentry in urban areas, such as Chicago and Baltimore, demonstrate that families of released prisoners are an important source of both emotional and tangible support for people returning home from incarceration. For example, former prisoners living in Chicago four to eight months post-release from custody cited family as the most important factor in helping them stay out of prison⁵:

- 92% reported getting financial support from someone in their family, and

- 88% were living with family.

Tapping family involvement in existing government services allows for early prevention and intervention in community justice supervision, preventing drug relapse, technical violations, and reincarceration. Supporting and incorporating families does not necessarily require additional resources. Most families involved in the criminal justice system are already connected to multiple government systems such as child welfare, public housing, and faith-based and social services. Family-focused methods prevent generational criminal justice system involvement because they work beyond the individual under supervision and contextualize the role of family in the reentry process.

We applaud this legislation’s support for local and state initiatives. We have found that successful, replicable programs are created when state and local entities have the guidance, funding, and leadership necessary to foster real change. Reentry provides an opportunity to address many interrelated challenges by uniting law enforcement, community service providers, and families in the common goal to break cycles of intergenerational criminal justice system involvement and improve substance abuse treatment outcomes.

Family Justice supports policies that promote effective reentry programs that integrate families into their prevention and intervention efforts, including reentry planning, substance abuse treatment, and other services. Successful reentry is enhanced by effectively *engaging* families to draw on their insights, strengths, and the other natural support they can provide to address reentry and family issues, rather than focusing only on deficits. By involving the family, prevention and intervention efforts can:

- Tap an existing resource;
- Improve outcomes in multiple areas that contribute to criminal justice system involvement, such as substance abuse, access to and coordination of mental and physical healthcare services, and housing; and
- Integrate long-term prevention and intervention strategies into current community supervision and other efforts.

Family Justice, supported by the U.S. Justice Department, U.S. Housing and Urban Development, the National Institute of Justice, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and state and local governments, has developed, tested, and implemented training and technical assistance for parole and probation agencies and non-profit organizations. Through our local and national work, we have learned that programs that successfully engage families must be culturally and linguistically competent, and program outcome measures must go beyond tracking recidivism rates to examine the factors that contribute to successful reentry.

We admire this legislation’s support for programs and research that integrate reentry planning and social services and look forward to this initiative’s success in uniting assessment, case

management, and outcome measures to benefit the families and communities affected by criminal justice involvement.

About Family Justice

Family Justice taps the strengths of government, families, and communities to break cycles of involvement in the criminal justice system. Through our unique, cost effective Bodega Model[®], we partner with government and families to enhance the health and well-being of poor families and improve the safety of communities with high rates of crime.

Our model helps families build on their strengths to support one another, bolstering the efficacy of services, and marshaling families' previously unrecognized resources. Our work is as much about prevention as it is about intervention, helping families address challenges and live a life without crime as well as improving outcomes for those under criminal justice supervision.

Family Justice addresses the overlapping issues that often occur in families, such as substance abuse, mental health and inadequate housing. This central aspect of our work identifies, and works to find solutions to the challenges that could otherwise hamper an individual's successful return to his or her community. Often, our work recognizes similar issues facing other family members, intervening to find solutions before a problem develops.

References

¹ Harrison, Paige M. and Beck, Allen J. *Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin: Prisoners in 2004*. Washington DC: U.S. Department of Justice, 2005 (NCJ Publication No: 210677). See also Carroll, Rebecca. "Study Shows Upswing in Arrests of Women." *The Washington Post*, October 24, 2005.

² Sullivan, Eileen. *Families as a Resource in Recovery from Drug Abuse: an Evaluation of La Bodega de la Familia*. New York, NY: New York: Vera Institute of Justice, 2002. The evaluation was funded by the National Institute of Justice, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Jacob and Valerie Langeloth Foundation, and the Fan Fox and Leslie R. Samuels Foundation.

³ Center for Substance Abuse Treatment. "Selected Research Outcomes for Family Approaches to Substance Abuse Treatment." *Substance Abuse Treatment and Family Therapy*. (2004). Treatment Improvement Protocol (TIP) Series, Number. 39. DHHS Publication No. (SMA) 04-3957. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

⁴ See for example: Travis, Jeremy, Amy Solomon, and Michelle Waul. *From Prison to Home: The Dimensions and Consequences of Prisoner Reentry*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, 2001. See also: La Vigne, Nancy G., Visher, Christy, and Castro, Jennifer. *Chicago Prisoners' Experiences Coming Home*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, 2004.

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⁵ La Vigne, Nancy G., Visher, Christy, and Castro, Jennifer. *Chicago Prisoners' Experiences Returning Home*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, 2004. See also ³La Vigne, Nancy G., Visher, Christy, and Travis, Jeremy. *Returning Home: Understanding the Challenges of Prisoner Reentry*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, 2001. *Returning* documenting experiences of prisoners returning to Maryland, Illinois, Ohio, and Texas.